

May 31, 2020

Dear Mayor Franklin and Everett City Council Members`

I have been following and participating in the Rethink Zoning effort over the last several months. I have provided comments in writing and verbally to staff and the Planning Commission. I provided written comments during the scoping process for the environmental review – Environmental Impact Statement. My comments at this time focus on observations related to how to move forward in the COVID 19 environment we all find ourselves. The word unprecedented is used related to what is happening to us all. In a truly short time, our world has changed and you as Mayor and City Council have made some very difficult financial decisions which has affected the services the City of Everett is providing.

It is important that the actions of the City Council are done so there is a basic understanding of the changes you are approving. What are the reasons for the changes and what is trying to be accomplished by the code and plans being reviewed? Informing and involving the public including property owners is essential to accomplish this goal. This is a challenge in the COVID 19 environment. There is truly little press coverage these days, which once was a significant source of information. Under the Growth Management Act public input is to happen at the policy level both in the development of plans and their implementing regulations. Once the plans and regulations are developed than development can move forward with some certainty and understanding of what is required of them.

I participated in the first Planning Commission meeting on May 19, 2020 using the remote technology. I called the phone number given to participate. This allowed me to listen to the meeting and to provide comments. The instructions given by staff were to watch the meeting on the City TV channel, which I did. The problem was the City TV channel does not sink with the phone number given to call. There is a lag of 30 or so seconds behind so the PowerPoint presentations by staff could not be followed. There needs to be an improvement to this system if this is the way to get public input.

Comments/Suggestions

1. I think the City Council needs to develop direction on what Council actions you are willing to review and act on in the COVID 19 remote system. The City Council not being able to be in the same room together with citizens present is an exceedingly difficult environment to make significant decisions on land use policy and regulations.
2. The Rethink Zoning effort is extremely complicated and takes a lot of time to review and make comments on. City Council needs to understand how the proposed changes differ from the existing code and why the changes are needed and get input from property owners and the public to inform your decision.
3. I am supportive of the pause on the single family and transit overlay which affected single family zoned areas. This is the area which I was following more closely than other parts of the code. I suggest at the minimum code changes which affect single family areas be paused including subdivision changes and the historic overlays.

4. I asked what was happening to contract rezones and project standards where there are agreements in place in commercial, industrial, and residential projects. An example is the Intermec project in SW Everett where a standard for setback from the single family residential to the north was established along with other standards to protect the single-family zoned area from the industrial area. What happens to this project and other projects with the Rethink Zoning proposed rezone action? I was told staff was going to put a list together of the projects which being proposed to be kept and which ones were not. This list is not available currently. I think Council needs to know how your action would affect these contracts/projects, with an explanation of what was being changed. Property owners and the affected neighbors need to be contacted so they know how your actions affect their property.
5. What happens to the Riverfront, the Port's Waterfront Center agreement and other custom zones created for specific areas and negotiated with the property owners with input from the community? Again, staff said a list would be put together.
6. I asked staff what public notice was proposed to property owners? I believe all property owners should receive a notice about the Rethink Zoning rezone action when the zone is being changed with significant code changes and initiated by the City. This has been the practice in the past. When Mayor Hanson was Mayor and a major update was done all property owners in the city received a notice. This was the practice when the city-initiated rezone actions. I know in talking to several citizens about the Rethink Zoning effort very few are aware of the effort and how it may affect them.

As we all know the world has been affected dramatically since the virus has spread around the world. Our individual plans be it travel or how we live day to day have changed. We are adjusting to this new world we live in. With the inability to get together in person I think major changes and decisions which do not absolutely need to be done should be paused until we all can get together to discuss these items. It is your policy decision to move ahead with the commercial and industrial changes, but I think it is problematic to move ahead without the face to face public hearing meetings and workshops.

Sincerely yours

Dave Koenig